

The Place of Prejudice in Modern Civilization

a speech by Sir Arthur Keith, 1931

Introductory

No matter how great a man might be, he could not make his appearance on this platform as the chosen representative of the students of the ancient University of Aberdeen without a surge of feelings rising within his breast. He could not don these rectorial robes without recalling the great men who have worn them: famous statesmen; men distinguished in all lines of human endeavour. And of them all none more brilliantly gifted than he who wore them last – the late Lord Birkenhead. Huxley, the man of Science, has worn them; so has Alexander Bain, the philosopher; you have seen an empire builder in them – the late Lord Strathcona. None of my predecessors has worn these robes with more advantage to our University and with greater distinction to himself than the Marquess of Huntly. My friend and fellow-graduate, Dr. J. Malcolm Bulloch, in writing the history of our Lord Rectors, has divided them into two classes – the ornamental and the useful. The classification breaks down in some instances: the Noble Marquess is both, whereas the man you have now chosen is neither. He is just a plain graduate sent out by this University forty-three years ago, who returns, after a long sojourn in the outer world, still a student and proud to be the representative of students in the Court of his old University.

Subject of this Address Outlined

My distinguished predecessors have often brought you messages of high import; they have given you “feasts of reason and of rhetoric.” Think of the finished literary repast which would have been laid before you if Colonel John Buchan had stood in my place! My message is one derived from personal experience, which, although devoid from rhetoric, will not be found, I hope, altogether wanting in reason. The subject I propose to discuss with you is one which has always fascinated us Scotsmen – that vast complex of mental actions and reactions we call Human Nature. How can we best exploit the qualities with which Nature has endowed us for our own happiness and for the ultimate good of Mankind?

The Qualities of Head and of Heart

We are all students of human nature. The moment a child on its mother’s knee comes to distinguish her features and voice, it has entered on this study – one which it will never complete, for human nature is the largest and richest mine in all the world. Masters of fiction will never exhaust the possibilities of this mine, dig they ever so deep and ever so long. From the most remote antiquity men have recognized that their mental manifestations fall into two categories – those of the “Head” and those of the “Heart.” Perhaps as a student of the human brain I ought to apologize for using terms which are so homely. Instead of “head” I might have spoken of the “higher or cortical centres”; instead of “heart” I might with greater precision, have referred you to the lower or basal centres of the brain. For our present purpose anatomical precision is unnecessary. As long as the Bible is read, the terms “head” and “heart” as applied to human nature will carry a definite meaning to everyone.

The Overlap of Head and of Heart

Now this sharp division of human nature into “Head” and “Heart” suffers from the same defect as Dr. Bulloch’s classification of the Rectors; head and heart are never quite separated;

there is a large overlap in their fields of action. “Head” and “heart” are but names for parts of the brain; these parts always act together; it is a matter of preponderance. In Burns we see the heart dominant; in Newton the head. No doubt the power driving forces of human nature – the forces of the heart – are resident in the great basal centres of the brain; the appetites which call for satisfaction, the desires, the zest for life, our animal propensities, our unreasoned likes and dislikes – our prejudices. Strange, too, that our spiritual aspirations should have their home in these lowly centres.

The Two Houses of Parliament

In the parliament of human nature, as in that of our national affairs, there are two houses – an upper, the “head”; a lower, the “heart.” A right understanding of the respective privileges of these two houses is of the utmost importance in the argument I am to place before you. The lower house – the heart – has played such an important part in man’s exodus from the dark of the past to the light of the present that we must give it our attention for a moment. The legislators who serve in the lower house or heart are our feelings and passions, our hopes and fears, our likes and dislikes. In the earlier days of man’s pilgrimage upwards, the lower house was dominant; in all ordinary occasions the lower house saved time and trouble by setting the executive – the will – in action without any appeal to the upper house or head. The lower house guided unconscious man forward; Nature has organized the lower house of man’s heart to serve her ulterior object – the production of higher and better races of mankind. Those inborn likes and dislikes – those promptings which the lower house sanctions without appeal to the upper house and which we name prejudice – are parts of Nature’s old evolutionary machinery. When provoked, prejudices give rise to an instant line of action. As civilization dawned and men came to live together in organized communities, these inborn legislators of the lower house had to be brought more under the control of the upper assembly. The progress of civilization has been possible just because man has been able to bring his lower house or heart more and more under the control of his upper house or head. Human reason has long wrestled with the prejudices of the heart, but has not yet overthrown them.

A Question of Importance

Would it be a good thing for the ultimate health and happiness of mankind if reason were not only to overcome our prejudices but to eliminate them from the heart altogether? Would it be for the future welfare of the race if all men and women throughout the world ruled their lives by reason? Sooner or later all the nations of the world will have to consider this question and find an answer to it. My own answer is based on a study of man’s long history. I am convinced that for the future welfare of mankind those inborn likes and dislikes of ours – our prejudices – must be given an assigned place. This is the theme which I want to discuss with you.

What is a Prejudice

Up to this point I have been speaking of prejudices in a general way. Let us now come to particulars and cite some instances which illustrate the manner in which they colour our thoughts and actions – predisposing us not only to reject or to oppose but also to prefer or to espouse one opinion or one line of action rather than another. Let us take first the opinion which we hold of our own University – the time-hallowed University of Aberdeen. It is the best University in the world – for you and for me. I thought so in my youth; I still think so. May there not be a feeling – a prejudice – working in our minds which renders this

conviction indisputable only so far as we are concerned? I know I am treading on delicate ground when I mention prejudice in this connection. For on discussing my attitude with a friend, who is also a fellow-graduate, he exclaimed: "A prejudice; it is a fact!" Now that is how prejudices are distinguished; they turn favoured opinions into facts. A fact to the faithful is a prejudice to the sceptic. Men and women are prejudiced in favour of what is their own. I have met graduates from most Universities of the world and find that one and all give the pride of place I would reserve for our own University to their particular home of learning. I do occasionally come across men and women who see no special virtue in their own University or speak ill of it. In such cases I suspect the defect to lie in them rather than in their University, so accustomed have I become to the part which prejudice plays in our lives. It is true that great men have sinned in this respect – Carlyle and Darwin, for example. How stupid great men can be. For such only the Universe itself is big enough to be a University. But as for ordinary men the case is different. We expect them, if they are normal beings, to speak of their University as their *Alma Mater*, and to be roused to that degree of resentment when ill is spoken of her as they would feel were aspersions to be cast on the actual mother who bore them.

Prejudice Exemplified

Prejudice of this kind penetrates deeply into the nature of all of us. We have a natural preference for what belongs to ourselves. Is it not a curious fact that every one of us is tempted to believe – in spite of all logic – that the home into which we were born is the best of all possible homes and that by some happy chance we were given the best of all possible parents? You cannot by force of argument deprive a man or woman of his or her birthright of prejudice. You cannot see a homestead as the man who was born in it sees it. You look at it; it is but a mean croft set at the edge of the heather; he looks at it, and behold! It is a palace! This city, this University, are much more to us than they are to strangers; they have become parts of ourselves.

Patriotism is a Prejudice

Then there is that potent prejudice we call patriotism – an inborn love of Scotland and of all that she stands for. All men and women set out on the journey of life with preferences, partialities, biases, prejudices, but Nature, in scattering her gifts, seems to have bestowed on us Natives of Scotland more than her usual allowance. These inborn tendencies so widely distributed and so tenaciously held must have some deep significance. Should we cultivate them, or should we root them out? Are they blessings, or are they curses? The truth is – as I hope to make clear to you – they can be both.

A Duty of Universities

Is it not, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, one of the chief duties of a University to weed out prejudices – particularly local prejudices – from the minds of its students? I fear that our University did not do its duty by me in this respect. I find myself still full of them. Are prejudices really poisonous plants which should be rooted up? I shall seek to answer this question anon; meantime, let me touch upon what was done to secure this end when I was a student in Marischal College. In its classrooms our professors opened magical windows for us; through them we could look into laboratories in distant countries – in Germany, France, Italy, America, Japan. Within these laboratories we could see men strenuously at work making new knowledge, adding to the resources of daily life, lifting up the civilization of the whole world,

laboring for the common benefit of Mankind. We learned the names of the men and what they did; they became our heroes. Truly in these student days Science was made to seize our minds as the force which was to remove local prejudice and make the whole world kin. Even as this warm ideal suffused our imaginations there rose in us a feeling – the desire to emulate for the sake of our country and of our University. Was there not even in this a primitive feeling – a preference or prejudice – coming into operations? I am afraid there was, and when I remember that the loudest cheers in our classrooms were given to announcements of discoveries made by men of our own University or of our own country I am afraid we discriminated; in short, we were prejudiced; the nearer to Aberdeen the discovery was made the more it interested us. I must own that even yet when I turn over the pages of a scientific or medical journal and see a communication signed by one who adds to his name the magical letters M.D. (Aberdn.) or D.Sc. (Aberdn.) I am at once tempted to read it. It is a frailty – a prejudice, I admit, but when you come to settle the warring affairs of mankind -- -a duty which will certainly fall to some of you – it is such frailties which have to be reckoned with.

Newspapers as Educators

In my student days there was another educative system at work which tended to widen our vision and curb our local prejudices. I was brought up in a home where newspapers were read; I can remember very well the first time I succeeded in deciphering a column from top to bottom – and how many columns have I read since then! Our Aberdeen journals were excellent: they opened widows – upon all countries and peoples; we came to realize that our part of Scotland was but a single mesh in the great web of human life and that our warp and woof held only if the rest of the world’s web was sound. Nevertheless, the news which we sought for first and which interested us most was that relating to the narrow circuit of our own locality. Even yet, when I open an Aberdeen newspaper, my eye searches for news of my native district. We Scots are by birth a sentimental people! Sentiment and prejudice are first-cousins. We hug the pleasures of memory more than any people.

Are Prejudices Acquired or are they Inborn?

I have been seeking to bring home to you by familiar instances what I mean by prejudice. Let me now inquire into the nature of these prejudices: Are they merely arbitrary likes and dislikes which we have acquired as we grew up? Or are they something more – something deeply rooted in our natures, an inheritance which has come down to us from the womb of time? I am convinced they are inborn; are part of the birthright of every child. If this be so, then another question must be asked and answered. Why has the human heart been so peculiarly constituted? My answer to this question is dear and confident. The human heart, with its prejudices, its instinctive tendencies, its likes and dislikes, its passions and desires, its spiritual aspirations and its idealism, is an essential part of the great scheme of human evolution – the scheme whereby Nature, throughout the eons of the past, has sought to bring into the world ever better and higher races of mankind. If we believe that Nature has used her forces to beautify the peacock’s tail for such a minor purpose, we need have no difficulty in believing she could have used them to fashion man’s heart when she had man’s earthly destiny as her aim. Prejudices, I believe, have their purpose. Man has become what he is, not by virtue of his head, but because of his heart.

Pre-Darwinian Evidence as to the Strength and Nature of Prejudice

By bringing the human heart into Nature’s scheme of evolution, it may seem to you that I

myself am weighed by prejudice – the Darwinian prejudice. All my life I have been looking at living things through Darwinian spectacles: my judgment may have become biased. Let us, therefore, go back to pre-Darwinian days and call a philosopher or two to tell us how they looked upon the qualities which we assign to the human heart. My first witness is Thomas Carlyle. Just a century ago he was on his way to London with the manuscript of *Sartor Resartus* in his portmanteau. That package, which he was carrying with him, was written in the solitudes of Craigenputtock by his heart – one of the greatest Scotland ever produced. A volcano of a heart, boiling with an idealism which blew sky-high such facts, reasons, and beliefs as obstructed its free escape heavenward. Carlyle knew the human heart, and this is what he said of it in *Sartor Resartus*: “But indeed man is, and was, always, a blockhead and dullard; much readier to feel and digest, than to think and consider. Prejudice, which he pretends to hate, is his absolute lawgiver; mere use and wont everywhere leads him by the nose.”

Adam Smith as a Witness

Carlyle thus bears out my contention – that prejudices exercise a dominant influence in settling the affairs of Mankind. You may object to Carlyle as a witness; he was given to exaggeration. He was of the south, of that splendid stock which gave Scotland her covenanters. Carlyles are not born in our part of Scotland. But the witness I am now to cite is of our breed – the Aberdeen breed, which uses head as well as heart in coming to its decisions and is not usually given to Carlylian exaggeration. My witness was dead and buried before Thomas Carlyle appeared at Ecclefechan. His name is Adam Smith, author of *The Wealth of Nations*. Although not actually born in Aberdeen, his father was, and that is sufficient to recommend the evidence he is to bear concerning the working of the human heart. (Note 1) Before he wrote *The Wealth of Nations* he had published, in 1759, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* – the best treatise on Human Nature known to me. It is a dissection of the human heart made by one who was free from all evolutionary heresy. When I ascribe the contrivances of the human heart to the evolutionary needs you may suspect me, but you cannot reject the evidence of Adam Smith on this score. He looked on these contrivances just as I do. Listen to an abbreviation of his argument. The “Author of Nature,” he declares, has endowed the human heart with an infinity of devices for two special purposes: (1) the preservation of the individual life; (2) for the welfare of human life in the mass. Man’s destiny, he insists, has not been entrusted to the decisions of his reason. Prejudices, all the virtues, vices, and devices of the human heart, he regarded as part of a creational design. Thus the opinion I am seeking to defend, namely, that prejudices and passions, special feelings and special reactions, instinctive likes and dislikes, are not artificially acquired, but have been grafted deeply into our natures for particular purposes, is not a discovery of these Darwinian days, but is a conclusion reached by a cool-headed Scot nearly two centuries ago.

1 Those who know the history of the University of Aberdeen may wonder why I do not cite as my witness one of her most famous sons and a prince among Scottish philosophers – Thomas Reid – in place of a derived Aberdonian, like Adam Smith. My chief reason will appear at the end of my discourse. If Thomas Reid had been cited, he would certainly have supported my contention that prejudices are inborn – quite as emphatically as does Adam Smith, which the following quotation from his Inquiry will go to prove. “Such original and natural judgments are part of the furniture which Nature hath given to the human understanding. They are the inspiration of the Almighty. They serve to direct us in the common affairs of life, when our reasoning faculty would leave us in the dark.” I may mention here the outstanding events of Reid’s life as they bear on his acceptability as a pre-Darwinian witness. He was born of a

stock long native to our part of Scotland and was educated at Marischal College, completing his divinity course in 1731 at the age of twenty-one. After being librarian to that college he became a minister of the Established Church of Scotland, and held the living of New Machar, near Aberdeen, for fourteen years. He then became a professor or Regent in Marischal College until 1764, when he was appointed to succeed Adam Smith in the University of Glasgow. I am indebted to my friend, Dr. Ivy McKenzie, of Glasgow, for drawing my attention to the support my argument obtains from Thomas Reid.

Prejudices which have to be Cleared Away to Reach the Truth

I have now reached the end of the first part of my argument. I am forthwith to assume that these prejudices which I mentioned to you have been grafted in our natures for a special purpose – an evolutionary purpose. Looking out on the world of humanity as at present constituted it is hard to see what useful purpose is served by these prejudices of ours; they are the source of infinite discord and unrest. To understand the part they have played in raising mankind to its high estate we must look out on the world, not as it now is, but as it was before our modern civilization wrecked Nature's original scheme. We have to make a journey into the prehistoric past if we are to explain the "devices of the human heart." Before we can make this journey I must prepare the way by clearing certain obstacles from our path. These obstacles are prejudices which cling closely to us and can be removed only by the strongest efforts of reason. The first of these prejudices relates to time – to the antiquity of man. Adam Smith had a restricted conception of time; in his eyes man's antiquity was a matter of some six thousand years; the modern Darwinist carries man's antiquity into a remote past. While he regarded the creational act as the work of a day, the modern Darwinist looks upon it as the labour of eons of years. Adam Smith thought of Man as an instantaneous creation – the perfected work of the Great Sculptor of the Universe. The modern Darwinist looks upon the creational forces which brought man into being as working gradually, their action being spread over many hundreds of thousands of years. Man, the Darwinist believes, was slowly and laboriously moulded by forces not mysteriously situated outside his body, but working in his very flesh, bone, and brain, fashioning him into what he has become. These forces are still in him, capable of carrying him onwards and upwards. Were Adam Smith alive now, I am certain he would not find it difficult to replace his restricted conception of time with the larger outlook of the modern Darwinist. The older and the newer ways of explaining man's origin are not so different as they appear. Adam Smith called it Nature; the modern Darwinist calls it Evolution. Both he and I, however, are agreed on these points: (1) the heart of man has been marvelously contrived; (2) its contrivances work for the ultimate welfare of Mankind. Call the creational forces which mould living things what you will, the cunning and contrivance which they have succeeded in bringing into being are only too familiar to us students of life. Everywhere we find contrivances; we spend our lives in seeking to unravel them and in explaining how they came about in the natural course of evolutionary events.

The Prehistoric World. The Nature, of our Quest

While pursuing the first part of my argument I have been somewhat unmannerly; I have kept you standing on the threshold – the threshold of the door which leads into the world of man's prehistoric past. As I push open this door and beg you to enter, I would again remind you of the object of our quest. We are in search of the beginnings and significance of these prejudices I have already mentioned to you – a partiality for what is our own; the preference for our own people, for our own locality, for our own mode of speech, for our own nation, and for our own traditions and history. What beneficial or evolutionary purpose could such

prejudices have served even in a pre-historic world? Far from tending to bring diverse peoples together, they serve in the present world to keep them apart and to separate the people of one locality from those of neighbouring districts. When we look closely at the manner in which the prehistoric world was arranged, we begin to understand that these prejudices are a part of Nature's scheme for man's advancement. The world we have entered is altogether different from that of to-day. There are no cities in it, no towns, not even villages; there is not a patch of garden nor a plot of corn. The earth retains its virgin state. Its human inhabitants are few in numbers, being everywhere broken up into local hunting communities, tribes, or clans. There are no high roads in this prehistoric world; no industries, no commerce. The prehistoric world I am picturing to you had an inconceivably long duration, standing to our historic period as a year does to a day. In this prehistoric world the modern races of mankind were evolved; from it they emerged into our historic world. Above all, I want you to observe a profound difference between our world and the one I am depicting to you: a difference which has the most direct bearing on my argument. Our world is organized for material progress – for the increase of wealth and the increase of knowledge. The prehistoric world, the real Garden of Eden, was organized for a totally different purpose. Nature had arranged it to serve her own particular purpose – the production of new and better breeds of man.

The Human Heart in the Prehistoric World

When you enter the prehistoric world with the object of discovering the origin of the prejudices which still cling to us so closely, you must fix your attention on one particular aspect of its population – its organization into separate local communities which I shall speak of as tribes or clans. The tribal organization is part of Nature's scheme. A modern breeder, if he entered this prehistoric world, would at once perceive the object which Nature had in view. If he were called on to evolve a new human breed he would do just what Nature has done, separate Mankind into herds and tribes and keep them isolated and pure for an endless period. Each tribe in our prehistoric world represented an evolutionary experiment. Without isolation Nature could have done nothing. How did she keep tribes apart? The answer to this question yields a clue to the object of our search – the origin of our prejudices. We are apt to think of seas, rivers, mountain-chains, deserts, and impenetrable jungles as the barriers which kept evolving tribes and races apart. No doubt they have assisted to secure this object, but Nature did not trust them. She established her real and most effective barriers in the human heart. These instinctive likes and dislikes of ours, which I speak of as prejudices, have come down to us from the prehistoric world. They are essential parts of the evolutionary machinery which Nature employed throughout eons of time to secure the separation of man into permanent groups and thus to attain production of new and improved races of Mankind.

The Nature of Race Prejudice

Before I shut the door of this prehistoric world and proceed to discuss problems relating to the one in which we now live, there are certain other aspects of its organization we must consider if we are to understand our prejudices aright. As you look through the doorway into this prehistoric world you become astounded at the ingenuity – almost diabolical – which Nature had introduced into its organization. She had arranged it on a competitive basis; each tribe was a team engaged in the eternal struggle to obtain promotion and avoid relegation. Our modern masters of football have but copied the scheme of competition which Nature had set up in her ancient world. Her League of Humanity had its divisions – white, yellow, brown, and black. Tribes constituted her competing teams. No transfers for her; each member

of the team had to be home-born and home-bred. She did not trust her players or their managers farther than she could see them! To make certain they would play the great game of life as she intended it should be played she put them into colours – not transferable jerseys, but liveries of living flesh, such liveries as the races of the modern world now wear. She made certain that not player could leave his team without being recognized as a deserter. To make doubly certain she did an almost unbelievable thing. She invaded the human heart and organized it so that her tribal teams would play her game – not theirs. She tuned the heart of her teams for her own ends. She not only imbued her opposing teams with an innate love of competition and of “teamwork”; she did much more. What modern football team could fact the goal-posts unless it developed as it took the field a spirit of antagonism towards the players wearing opposing colours? Nature endowed her tribal teams with this spirit of antagonism for her own purposes. It has come down to us and creeps out from our modern life in many shapes, as national rivalries and jealousies and as racial hatreds. The modern name for this spirit of antagonism is race-prejudice.

Patriotism

We have visited the prehistoric tribal world of humanity with the object of finding an explanation of various forms of personal prejudice, local prejudice, national prejudice, and racial prejudice. I have been seeking to prove to you that Nature had planted these qualities deeply in the tribal heart of the prehistoric world for her own purpose – the production of the higher and better races of Mankind. We Scotsmen ought to understand the working of the tribal heart; not so many centuries ago our ancestors still retained the organization of the prehistoric world. The tribal heart still beats strongly within us. We ought to know something of that inborn passion for our native soil which is called patriotism. Onlookers who note the numbers in which we Scots seek a home in other lands may doubt if this feeling or prejudice is really deeply rooted in us. We know better; never a Scotsman, as he sailed away and saw his native shores sink out of sight, but was buoyed up by the hope of a speedy and fortunate return. Why should this special love for our native land be so developed in us? Patriotism, if a precious, is also a costly prejudice. Modern civilization wars against it – seeking for its destruction. It serves no useful or economic purpose in the world of to-day. But if we hark back to the prehistoric tribal world – Nature’s Kingdom – we find it to be an essential part of an evolutionary scheme. Suppose, for a moment, that there was no bond which tied a tribal community to its own locality. The members of such a tribe or clan would at once scatter; Nature’s evolutionary team would be broken up. Patriotism is part of Nature’s machinery for keeping her evolutionary teams intact. Tribe and territory go together; to keep a tribe intact a tribal territory must also be kept intact. A tribe regarded its territory as sacred. So strongly was this feeling developed in our ancestral clansmen that they died rather than that an invader should put a foot on it. The national patriotism of Scotland I regard as an inheritance from our tribal ancestry.

The Desire for Independence

There is still another quality – a very primitive one – derived from our tribal ancestors which I now desire to press on your attention. It is an affair of the human heart, first-cousin to the prejudices and predilections we have been discussing. It is the love of independence which now is and has ever been so strongly developed in Scotland. We Scotsmen, when called upon, have no hesitation in undertaking the management of the affairs of other peoples and other countries, but we deeply resent interference by outsiders in the conduct of our own affairs. Why should we resent a foreign civil service – especially if it could manage our

affairs better than we do ourselves? Mr. Bernard Shaw has said that the nation which wishes its affairs to be well managed should recruit its government from an alien people. He has suggested that England might do better if she went to China for her Ministers of State. We have given India peace and prosperity such as she could never have attained for herself, yet this spirit of independence, so long asleep, begins again to stir in her blood and provoke a fever of unrest. No appeal to the modern world or to the business mind will help you to understand this strange bubble of the human blood – this inbred love of independence. But when you appeal to the pre-historic tribal world you immediately obtain enlightenment. Think, for a moment, what the fate of a tribe in our prehistoric world would have been if this passion had not been developed in its tribal heart. Such a tribe would have been too “proud to fight,” even for independence. When it gave up the management of its own affairs it lost its place amongst Nature’s evolutionary teams; it fell out of her league and was promptly relegated to the limo of the unfit. Nature made sure of her tribal teams by making this love of independence a dominant passion. It is just because we Scotsmen are so recently evolved from a tribal state that this unconquerable desire is so strong within us.

The Object of this Address

Some little way back I had to claim your patience for keeping you standing so long on the threshold of the prehistoric world. We have been rambling through that world, picking up certain things. What has been the object of our search? If I am to retain your attention it is now necessary that I unfold to you’re the end I have in view. It is to obtain light on the ferment of unrest which disturbs the peace and harmony of nations and peoples in our modern world. These disturbances spring not from man’s head, but from his heart. If we are to discover the cause of these national and racial disturbances we have to go back to the real Garden of Eden and not the circumstances amidst which the heart of man was moulded. It is useless to appeal to the annals of classical Rome and Ancient Greece for light on these modern problems. The heart of man was moulded long before their city-states, empires, and republics came into existence. Nor does an appeal to the oldest records of Egypt or of Mesopotamia assist us. We have to go back to the prehistoric tribal world out of which the pioneers of these ancient civilizations and of ours emerged some ten thousand years ago. What I have been seeking to prove to you is this: the heart of modern civilized man is still alive with the instinctive longings, desires, and prejudices of tribal man. And when he sees the problems of human nature as we students of evolution see them, what is he to do? What measures is he to take? Is he to legislate so as to eliminate our inherited prejudices, or is he to give these prejudices a place in modern civilization? It is in answer to these queries I now propose to lay before you.

The Duality of Human Nature

If we are to obtain light on certain obscure but pressing problems of the modern world there is still one other aspect of our tribal ancestors I must lay before you. Every tribesman had a dual personality; he was one person to his tribe; to the rest of the world quite another. All were Marrie-Macconochies or Jekyll-Hydes. To his fellow-tribesmen our tribesman was kind, unselfish, loyal, and affectionate; the moment he thought of or dealt with those outside his tribe he became hard-hearted, treacherous, and cruel. He was idealistic, but his ideals were for the aggrandisement of his own people and the undoing of all rival tribes. Faith, hope, and charity resided in his heart, but the field of their activity was confined within the narrow limits of the tribal frontier. Within these limits he religiously observed the ten commandments; outside them he habitually broke each one of them. If his fellow-tribesman

killed one of an alien tribe, that, in his eyes, was an act of heroism, but if his friend were slain by an alien enemy, then he viewed the act as one of foul murder. The tribal heart had two standards of justice – one which held within the tribe, the other which was applied to those who were outside it. The tribesman listened to slanders cast upon rival tribes with equanimity, but the slightest aspersion on his own touched him to the quick. He has a peace heart and a war heart; in the twinkling of an eye the one replaced the other.

The Explanation of the Duality of the Human Heart

What is the explanation of this dual action of the tribal heart? We who are the descendants of a clannish stock should be in a better position to answer than those whose natures have filtered through generations of city life. For my part I have no doubt as to the right explanation; to find it you have to go back to our prehistoric tribal world – Nature's world. As I have assured you there is no device, be it ever so cunning, that Nature will not find out and apply – especially when it concerns her greatest work – the creation of man. Nature planted love and hate side by side in the tribal heart – but for what purpose? Suppose for a moment, she had given the tribal heart only a capacity to love, what would have happened? Why, Mankind throughout the world would have regarded each other as brothers, clung together and mingled together. There could have been no separation of Mankind into tribes – which are Nature's evolutionary cradles. Without a tribal organization there could have been no evolutionary progress – no ascent of man. Let us look at the problem from another point of view. Suppose the hearts of our tribal ancestors had been endowed only with a power to hate. What would have happened? Men could not live together who are capable only of hatred; tribes could not have been formed; and if you are to have evolutionary progress you must mobilize Mankind into groups. This dual organization of the tribal heart – virtuous at one moment, vicious at the next, is part of Nature's scheme of evolution. A tribesman's heart, with its loves and hates, its likes and dislikes, its heritage of prejudices, still beats in every human breast. The problem which the world is now seeking to solve is this: How is our tribal heritage of prejudice to be reconciled with the needs of our modern civilization?

The Collapse of the Prehistoric World

What brought about the collapse of the primitive prehistoric world of which I have said so much? It was brought about by the most fateful revolution which has ever overtaken man's earthly pilgrimage. In the prehistoric world man was the slave of Nature – driven onward not by his head but by his heart, dependent for his food on what fell from Nature's table. It was man himself who initiated the revolution which brought about the collapse of his ancient world. Somewhere about ten thousand years ago, when our part of Scotland was emerging from her last icy mantle, a tribe or local community in the south-western corner of Asia made the critical discovery that Nature could be tamed; instead of being man's mistress, she could be made his servant. The pioneers of the revolution which brought in our modern civilization found out, by the use of their heads, that a supply of food could be assured by the domestication of animals and the tilling of the soil. They introduced the rudiments of agriculture, which the result that a tribal territory, which in the prehistoric world provided only a starvation subsistence to a handful of people, could be made to yield enough to support a populous community. From its centre of discovery the art of agriculture spread slowly outwards in every direction, bringing about, as it expanded, wave upon wave, a complete transformation in man's mode of life. Villages came into existence; wealth began to accumulate; cities arose. And with cities came crafts, industries, and commerce. As the revolution spread, the prehistoric tribal world collapsed before it. Commerce broke down

tribal frontiers, thus destroying Nature's original scheme for man's advancement. Out of the tribal debris arose a long succession of nationalities and empires – flourishing for a period, but always carrying within them the seeds of their ultimate dissolution. In the prehistoric world Nature ruled; in the historic or modern world man seeks to snatch the sceptre from her hand and become master of his own destiny. What are his chances of success?

From Tribalism to Nationalism

Do not think I am speaking of obscure events which happened far away and long ago. They concern us here and now. Scotland had her prehistoric period. Thanks to the labours of my friend Professor James Ritchie and of the archaeologists associated with him, we know that human beings, much like ourselves, began to drift into Scotland while glaciers still clothed her hills and filled her valleys. Our history, like that of the Norwegians and Swedes, began some ten or twelve thousand years ago, as the last period of glaciations came to an end. How slowly the revolution I have been speaking of spread westwards will be evident when I tell you that it was not until about two thousand years before the Christian era that the first rudiments of agriculture reached our shores. The graves of the men who first brought this revolutionary movement to our part of Scotland have been discovered; my friends, Professor Robert Reid and Professor Alex Low, have revealed to all the world the kind of men and women these early Aberdonians were. They were people of Baltic origin; their blood probably still runs in the veins of some of us. No doubt at the time of their arrival; they were still in a tribal state of organization. Since their coming, wave has succeeded wave, each better equipped than its predecessor for the modern or economic battle of life. As agriculture improved, as industries and trade expanded, tribes swelled in size, their frontiers became gradually expanded until it covered the whole population of this island north of the Tweed. Economic necessity forced this revolution on our forefathers. It was an affair of the head rather than of the heart. We can best realize the extent to which the revolution of the last four thousand years has affected Scotland if we fix our attention on this small patch of land, between the mouths of the Dee and Don. Only a short while ago, as we students of human evolution reckon time, it was the haunt of a few tribesmen; by industry and enterprise this same patch of land has become the site of a great city and University, both taking their full part in the life of the widest Empire the world has ever known. Our "heads" have worked this miracle, but inside our breasts beats the old tribal heart – the heart which binds us together and compels us to think our own the best. These feelings, sentiments, and prejudices I mentioned to you in my introduction are parts of our prehistoric heritage. What are we to do with it – scrap it or us it?

The Cure of Unrest in the Modern World

We have now reached the goal which I have had to view throughout my address – a consideration of the spirit of unrest which afflicts the modern world. That unrest is not a disorder of the head, but of the heart. Modern man is struggling to adapt his inheritance from a prehistoric tribal past to the economic needs of the modern world. Mankind is more in need of a racial physician than in any of its many previous maladies. The world to-day is a bed of sickness and there is no lack of physicians standing round the patient. The peoples of Scotland, England, and Ireland are on that bed; all the nationalities of Europe are there; nay, all mankind is on it. Let us listen first to our good physicians; they assure us there can never be health in our modern world until all mankind sleeps under the same tribal blanket. Mankind throughout the world must be massed until it forms a single united harmonious tribe.

The Ideal of One World One Tribe

This proposal to weld the diverse peoples of the world into a single tribe is one of the most glorious ideals which has ever seized this imagination of man. Can it be attained? Is it possible to wipe out the bad and hating side of our tribal heart and leave only its good loving attributes? Would it be possible to enlarge the compass of tribal affection until white, yellow, brown, and black races all came within the dominance of a single tribal spirit? If this could be accomplished, not at once, but by the acceptance of a common policy pursued over a long period of time, then ultimately, there being no tribal enemy left to hate, the bad side of the human heart must perish from inanition. We should then have a universal brotherhood. Every man could then dwell in safety under his vine and under his fig-tree. Every sword could be beaten into a plough-share and every spin into a pruning-fork. We who live under the shadow of a great war cannot shut our minds to the appeal which this great ideal makes to our hearts. It was the longing for a unitribal world that brought the League of Nations into existence.

Is a Unitribal World a Possibility?

Can this dream of a unitribal world, free for ever from war, be realized? Much of what has happened in these past centuries justifies the expectations of the idealist. Multitribal Caledonia has become unitribal Scotland; a common tribal spirit has spread from the Tweed to the English Channel, binding the separate peoples of England into a single nationality. England and Scotland, after wasting their substance in centuries of war, linked their destinies under a common tribal chief – James VI of Scotland – I of England. This Union has not undone the tribal or national spirit in either country; nay, I believe that a sense of separate nationality is as strong in Scotland and in England as ever it has been. The Union was made possible and has prospered just because we and our partners have been able to bring our tribal inheritance sufficiently under the control of reason for all workaday purposes. Now if we Britons have been able to bring our national and racial instincts under the control of reason, why should not the nationalities of Europe succeed in doing the same thing? If reason succeeded in obliterating the national frontiers of Europe, why not cause the movement to spread outwards into the world until it extended from pole to pole, thus bringing all the children of mankind into a common tribal fold. The diverse races of to-day are, if we Darwinists are to be trusted, the progeny of a common stock. Nature, laboring in the womb of time, has brought them forth. Why not undo Nature's handiwork and free the world for ever from the antagonisms of nationality and of race?

The Price of Deracialization

The scheme of the ideal world I have outlined to you is nursed in the hearts which throb with the good or compassionate side of our tribal nature. In considering it, you must not let your hearts run away with you overmuch; you must give your heads an opportunity of measuring the possibilities of such a scheme. To obtain universal and perennial peace you must also reckon the price you will have to pay for it. The price is the racial birthright that Nature has bestowed on you. To attain such an ideal world, peoples of all countries and continents must pool not only their national interests, but they must also pool their bloods. Black, brown, yellow, and white must give and take in marriage and distribute in a common progeny the inheritance which each has come by in their uphill struggle through the leagues of prehistoric time towards the present. If this scheme of universal deracialization ever comes before you as a matter of practical politics – as the sole way of establishing peace and good will in all parts

of our world, I feel certain both head and heart will rise against it. There will well up within you an overmastering antipathy to securing peace at such a price. This antipathy or race prejudice Nature has implanted within you for her own ends – the improvement of Mankind through racial differentiation. Race prejudice, I believe, words for the ultimate good of mankind and must be given a recognized place in all our efforts to obtain natural justice for the world.

The Price of Racialism

Thus I come deliberately to the opinion that race prejudice has to be given a recognized place in our modern civilization. I have asked you to count the price you must pay for a deracialized world. In turn you may demand of me whether I have reckoned the cost of maintaining our racialized world. Yes, I have. It means a continuation of Nature's old scheme of intertribal rivalries and eternal competition. Without competition Mankind can never progress; the price of progress is competition. Nay, race prejudice and, what is the same thing, national antagonism, have to be purchased, not with gold, but with life. Nature throughout the past has demanded that a people who seeks independence as well as peace can obtain these privileges only in one way – by being prepared to sacrifice their blood to secure them. Nature keeps her human orchard healthy by pruning; war is her pruning-hook. We cannot dispense with her services. This harsh and repugnant forecast of man's future is wrung from me. The future of my dreams is a warless world. As a gardener, Nature has two sides, a good and a bad. She plants and she also prunes. If we accept her, we have to accept her altogether. Sooner or later she brings the false prophet to book.

The Significance of Self-determination

My ominous forecast of man's future is not based solely upon my studies of the prehistoric world nor on my analysis of the inheritance which has come down to us from that world. It is supported by what is now happening in every part of our globe. There is a movement on foot now which is the reverse of the one which brought the League of Nations into being. The leaguist movement seeks for the universal dominance of the good or altruistic side of our tribal nature. Self-determination, on the other hand, encourages the power to hate as well as the power to love. It seeks to resuscitate the tribal heart with all its prejudices; its likes and its dislikes. This separatist (self-determinist) movement is stirring the blood of peoples in every part of the world at the present time. A century ago it spread through South America and established in that continent a dozen warring nationalities, each in search of freedom to work out their separate destinies. It is afoot to-day in India, China, Arabia, Turkey, Egypt and in other parts of Africa, in the Balkans, Central Europe, Europe, and in the lands which surround the Baltic. It has led to part of Ireland separating itself from ourselves; there are symptoms of self-determination in Wales and in Scotland. In every instance you will see that a people which embarks on the policy of self-determination is not moved by a commercial spirit. Self-determination is not good for business. Always in the forefront is placed the demand of independence – as if any people in this modern world can really be independent! A self-determined people is one which has resolved to take its fate in its own hands for better or worse. It isolates itself by barriers of tariff, speech, literature, coinage, and laws. Patriotism becomes dominant in the heart; the heart sways the head. In such a nation we see a resurrection of the spirit of the independence which dominated every tribal unit of Nature's ancient realm.

The Price Paid for Self-determination

Is, then, self-determination a policy which will heal the sores of our modern world? That depends on the extent to which it is carried. There is a latent spirit of self-determination in Aberdeenshire; Yorkshire has the same hidden desire. If the movement were given a free rein, Europe would speedily become a vast conglomeration of warring tribal states. Even if carried out to a less degree, small nationalities which embark on a policy of self-determination can control only their internal affairs; they can share in determining their outside affairs only so far as their great neighbours may permit them. There is a guaranteed security. Nevertheless the policy of determinism has certain great advantages. It encourages the development of a local spirit and of native talent. A people which assumes nationality and sets out to develop its own mental, moral, and material resources, strengthens its self-reliance, its faith in its destiny, its belief and pride in the tradition, customs, and literature of its country.

Summary of my Argument

I have led you a long way to reach this point of my argument. I began by drawing attention to certain local and national prejudices which cling to us. To explain the origin and significance of these prejudices I had to carry you into man's prehistoric world, the scene of his evolution. Then I had to trace the break-up of the prehistoric world and the rapid establishment of the one in which we now live – a world of diverse races, of vast cities, immense centres of industry, and great highways of commerce. The prehistoric world, in which man's tribal heart was fashioned, was organized by Nature for the evolution of new and better races of Mankind. Man has organized the modern world for his material progress – for increase of knowledge, comfort, and wealth. Man's tribal heart finds itself at war with the conditions of modern civilization and seeks to reassert itself. Two cures are proposed for its restoration, Leaguism and Determinism. Both remedies, I believe, are more difficult to tolerate than the disorders they are called on to cure. What do I believe? This: Give our prejudices a place in our civilization, but keep them under the control of reason.

Both Reason and Prejudice must have a Place in National Policy

In conclusion, permit me to outline the policy which appeals to me – not as an anthropologist, who should be devoid of all national bias, but as a Scotsman. I am for the nonce a Scotsman speaking to Scotsmen. Local and national prejudices are as strongly grafted in the nature of us Scotsmen as in that of my People. Their strength has been our strength – just because we have never permitted our hearts to overmaster our heads. Far from rooting them out, I would advise you to tend and protect them, being ever mindful to pay as much attention to the decisions of your heads as to the dictates of your hearts. We cannot forget, even if we would, what our forefathers have done for Scotland and for the upbuilding of the confederated nationalities which Britain has flung round the world. We share in a great and common heritage and have given – in common with England, Wales, and Ireland – our hostages to fortune. We are partakers in the most momentous enterprise which has ever been undertaken by any people – an enterprise fraught with dangers and responsibilities. Presently these responsibilities and dangers will devolve on you of the rising generation. You will work for peace, I know; the English-speaking peoples become more and more the custodians of peace. I am not afraid of the future of our English-speaking league if all its members realize the part which prejudice plays in determining the fate of mankind. You will find as time goes on that the spirit of self-determination, far from weakening, will grow in strength in all parts of the Empire – in England, Wales, Scotland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand – just as in our

time it has overwhelmed Southern Ireland. You need not fear the development of a local spirit. It may work – nay, it will work – for the health of a nation. But there is an important proviso – the national heart must never master the national head. Prejudice has a place, a very important place, in the development of peoples; it binds and will continue to bind British nationalities together. But if union between our nationalities is to withstand the stresses of conflicting interest, the heart has to be strengthened by clear-sighted intelligence. The place of prejudice in our modern civilization should be that of servant, not of master. It may be a national prejudice on my part, but I believe that Scotland in this respect has been exemplary in her conduct; she has always shown a willingness to sacrifice her own immediate interests for the welfare of the confederation. I have still a hope that some day our brethren of Southern Ireland will follow our example and join wholeheartedly in the British League. A real British League, where head and heart are balanced – how much does that spell for the security and peace which the world so longs for.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me quote a sentence which our philosopher, Thomas Reid, wrote in the autumn of his days and in the ripeness of his wisdom. His final counsel to the men of his time was this: “As far as the intention of Nature appears in the institution of Man, *we ought to comply with that intention and act agreeably to it.*” Is it not strange that he, pursuing a totally different course in life, should reach, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, identically the same conclusion that I have reached in the earlier half of the twentieth century, with the wealth of knowledge that modern anthropology has placed at my disposal? For Thomas Reid’s gospel is that which I have preached to you. Even in the modern world we must listen to the voice of Nature. Under the control of reason, prejudice has to be given a place in the regulation of human affairs.